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ABSTRACT

Intended for academics interested in small town research with an applied focus, this paper argues that high quality research aimed at data base development must occur before academics can work with practitioners in any policy forum. The paper begins by documenting the lack of research on small and rural governments and the need for a sound data base to help small governments (defined as those with populations of less than 25,000) operate effectively. A significant portion of the paper is devoted to suggestions for organizing systematic data collection across the 50 states. Obstacles to such a network are outlined, and readily available telecommunications capabilities for linking researchers in joint problem development, data collection, and research dissemination are promoted. The paper analyzes lessons learned from a series of small town studies conducted in North Carolina since 1979 to lay the foundation for development of a national network to conduct small government research. Topics include the importance of the research users' perspective, research design, and funding sources. Concluding notes provide sources of further information about computer networking, information utilities, and the National Small Government Research Network. (JHZ)

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BUILDING A DATA BASE: THE 'NATIONAL' SMALL GOVERNMENT RESEARCH NETWORK

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BUILDING A DATA BASE: THE `NATIONAL' SMALL GOVERNMENT RESEARCH NETWORK

by

Beverly A. Cigler

ABSTRACT

The lack of systematic research on small governments is described while recognizing recent heightened research interest. Drawing on lessons learned through a series of single state research efforts that incorporate a users' perspective to guide problem choice and dissemination of results, suggestions are offered for organizing systematic data collection across the fifty states. Readily available telecommunications capabilities for linking researchers in joint problem development, data collection, and research dissemination are also promoted. The research format allows researchers the flexibility to pursue their own research interests and methodologies while helping to build a systematic national data base on small communities.

More than 90 percent of this nation's municipal and town-township governments serve populations of less than 10,000 people apiece. Yet, much of what public administration offers these small governments is really geared for units of much larger size (50,000+ population). "Smallness" is not well understood by researchers attuned to examining bureaucratic relationships where few if none exist. Sokolow (1986a) makes these points and explains the organizational characteristics of small governments as both qualitatively and quantitatively distinct from larger governments. The differences he cites are: fewer employees, non-hierarchical structures, multiple and overlapping official responsibilities, more constraints on professional administrators, greater informality, and politicization of administrative routine. Since the problems and needs of small, especially rural, jurisdictions are different than the problems and needs of large urban areas, "solutions" must also be different (Reid, 1982; Honadle, 1983).

This paper (1) Offers a justification for increased research attention to small governments; (2) Points out some positive signs within public administration as it faces the development of an adequate data base for understanding small town management and policy making, the ability to offer informed policy suggestions to practitioners in small and rural areas, and adequate teaching about small

communities; (3) Outlines the key obstacles facing the organization of systematic research on small towns; and (4) Utilizes lessons learned from a series of small town studies conducted systematically in one state (North Carolina) since 1979 to lay the foundation for development of a national research network to conduct small government research. [1] The research network proposed will be facilitated through use of state-of-the-art telecommunications capabilities for information transfer and communication among researchers.

The article is directed toward academics interested in small town research, especially those with an applied focus. This group has the potential to: (1) Transfer research results to others studying local governments of all sizes; (2) Work with practitioners in devising policies and managing programs; and (3) Educate and train students (pre-service, in-service, workshop participants, etc.) about small town and rural governance. The basic argument presented is simply that high quality research aimed at data base development must occur before academics can work with practitioners in any policy forum. Moreover, it is argued that the existing core of small town specialists must devote careful attention to "researching the potential research agenda" from a users' perspective or the necessary foundations of a data base will not likely emerge (Rich, 1981). Finally, underlying the project's development is the

belief that our understanding of local government is incomplete unless more research is conducted concerning the units that comprise the majority of governmental entities--small towns and counties. The organizing concept for the research proposed is that of governmental size, defined as those governments with population of less than 25,000.

JUSTIFYING SYSTEMATIC DATA COLLECTION ON SMALL GOVERNMENTS

What is most striking about research in general on small and rural governments is the sparse investigation by academics at all. Despite some valuable studies, much of the existing information produced is either broad theoretical discourse leading to prescriptive policy statements, or general management principles applied to the small city or rural setting without concern for its uniqueness (i.e., smallness, isolation, low population density, etc.) (Cigler, 1984). Most existing research has not been directly aimed at systematically uncovering information about how small governments operate and why. The result is a dearth of basic data upon which to build sound research, develop policy and management options, and offer students timely and relevant educational materials (Cigler, 1987b). [2]

The lack of systematic research efforts is especially troublesome at a time when small governments in general--especially those in rural areas—are experiencing a changing environment which includes: (a) Searching for new or

altered roles in a changing national economy; (b) New service delivery responsibilities brought by a decentralized federalism; (c) Increased burdens of policy coordination for managing the decentralized system while seeking to preserve local autonomy; and (d) Increased capacity building efforts from a variety of sources. Researchers have simply offered little depth in rethinking the foundations of small town or small county governance, policy making, or capacity building and have inadequately sorted out the differences between small and large cities and/or small and large counties in general (Cigler, 1984).

Few would attempt to tell small or rural governments how to operate or make policy. However, a sound data base on the key elements of rural and small government capacity (i.e., personnel, structure, systems) can be the basis for informed policy/management decisions. Such data would also be useful to those studying local governments of any type. Honadle (1981) offered a careful definition of an organization's "capacity":—its ability to: anticipate and influence change; make informed, intelligent decisions about policy; develop programs to implement policy; attract and absorb resources; manage resources; and evaluate current activities to guide future action. The need is to use that framework to develop an understanding of the current capacity of small governments, the reasons for existing capacity, and how changes occur. The need is for

systematically obtained, verifiable data. How do these governments operate? What are they governments doing to reduce expenditures, increase revenues, and develop programs? What is most efficient and effective and why? What can they do--given limited resources, expertise, etc.? How do small governments change and adapt to change? Where do they go for assistance and how is it used? (Cigler, 1986a; 1987a, b).

POSITIVE SIGNS FOR SMALL GOVERNMENT DATA BASE DEVELOPMENT

Several trends suggest a guarded optimism for building an adequate data base for the study of small governments. The National Association of Towns and Townships (NATaT) has emerged as a powerful voice in Washington for small communities--developing policy recommendations, providing technical assistance, educational services, training workshops, and specialized publications, as well as a National Center for Small Communities. NATaT joins a large and diverse group of existing organizations that work with rural governments (Brown, 1980).

An informal group of American Society for Public Administration (ASPA) members formed a Rural Public Administration Network (RPAN) to facilitate research and idea exchange. The group includes academic researchers affiliated with universities and research institutes as well as government researchers. RPAN's newsletter (by the same

name) is published through the Southern Rural Development Center, Mississippi State University. [3] Members from the Economic Research Service (ERS) and the Extension Service, both of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), have taken the initiative to work closely with RPAN, offering linkages among academic researchers, government researchers, and practitioners.

Several new books, as well as journal symposia and other publications recently emerged on rural administration (e.g., Seroka, 1986; Watkins and Watkins, 1984; Lonsdale and Enyedi, 1984). ASPA meetings, as well as those of the American Political Science Association (APSA), have included entire panels and papers devoted to small town governance. An increasing number of high quality single state research efforts by academics strapped for research funding have turned to studying communities in their home states rather than relying on relatively expensive data collection efforts involving national data. For example, researchers in a number of states have presented papers on their home state's implementation of the small cities community development block grant program (CDBG). These efforts, however, were not coordinated across states before data collection began so that comparisons and explanatory power regarding the successes of the states in handling the the small cities CDBG program are limited. Missing was a

mechanism to link these various researchers at the outset of research so that commonality in test instruments and interpretation of findings could emerge.

There is also a growing consensus among those studying small governments that what they study is different from other types of local governments. Honadle's (1983, 1985) initial charting of unique characteristics of rural public administration—isolation, low population density, limited expertise, etc.--is useful. Her (Honadle, 1981) capacity building framework is also a valuable guide for organizing data collection although, as Gargan (1981) explained, the imprecise use of such terms as capability and capacity has worked to the detriment of research and theory. Nonetheless, as Hawkins (1980) recognized, at its core, capacity building is concerned with political and administrative arrangements. While small government and capacity building characteristics are useful in establishing a research agenda, guidelines are necessary for operationalizing capacity. Researchers need to use common definitions and operationalizations in conducting systematic research to determine what differences various levels of capacity make for policy and management decisions and implementation, as well as how capacity can be developed.

Another positive sign for data base development and collaborative research is the development of electronic information utilities such as Delphi which make possible the

linkage of scholars interested in research on small governments. [4] A research group can be developed as a total information and communication network--allowing members to participate in computer conferences, send electronic mail to each other, establish bulletin boards to relay information and expand membership, conduct polls, jointly develop questionnaires or research agendas, coauthor manuscripts electronically, transfer questionnaires and manuscripts, develop an online journal, access census or other data, do bibliographic searching, or simply communicate with each other at any time deemed necessary.

PoliNet, the nonprofit, university-owned (North Carolina State University), international customized computer network managed by social scientists, offers members access to all of the communications and information facilities described above. This professional network, part of Delphi, was established primarily for researchers in public administration and political science. [5] All of the ideas and strategies for research organization suggested here can be implemented through use of PoliNet.

OBSTACLES TO SMALL TOWN DATA BASE DEVELOPMENT

The renewed interest in rural and small governments is encouraging. The use of an information utility such as PoliNet can have profound effects on the nature of small town research organization and implementation, offering the

ability for speedy communication and information exchange at low cost. One possibility is that the negative communication effects caused by one key small town/rural characteristic--isolation--can be reduced simply by the opportunities made possible by telecommunications networks.

Despite these positive signs, several major obstacles face the research collaboration needed to develop a national data base on small communities:

First, as revealed by several recent reviews of the literature (Bozeman and Massey, 1982; Fox, 1986) policy analysis in general is maligned for its lack of significant utility for practitioners. Critics offer straightforward, insightful arguments that technically accurate but politically naive policy analysis has little relevance for policy making especially due to a lack of attention to user information needs, the time horizons of decision makers, and the context in which decisions are made (Kash and Ballard, 1985). The problems presumably are even greater for a research area largely devoid of theory and/or data such as the study of rural and small governments. Although contrary views exist (McAdams, 1984; McCurdy and Cleary, 1984), knowledge utilization studies also indicate little direct use of policy research (Caplan, 1976; Weiss, 1979, 1980; Hedge and Mok, 1986). (This may be partly because clients of such research do not understand the uses of evaluation.)

In addition, policy researchers in general are often faulted for producing low quality reports, dealing with the wrong questions, and failing to be more aggressive in promoting their findings (Bozeman and Massey, 1982; Jones, 1976; Rein and White, 1977; Mead, 1983, 1985; Hedge and Mok, 1986). Weiss (1978: 45) makes the point that "researchers often choose and conceptualize problems in terms of the methodologies in which they are proficient. They do not pick the research method to suit the problem but almost unwittingly see that aspect of the problem to which their methodology applies." Ripley (1985) makes a similar point.

Kash and Ballard (1985) point to a lack of attention to user information needs and the context in which decisions are made as two key reasons for naive research. Because of the relative isolation of rural areas and the wide diversity within rural and small town America, the academic research community bears a substantial burden to incorporate a users' perspective when developing an adequate data base.

Third, research on local government is generally weak in linking organizational theory and public policy (Beyer, Stevens, and Trice, 1983). Without careful attention to the nuts-and-bolts concerns of the organizational units that develop and implement policies, policy theory is unlikely to mature. The problems are greater when studying rural governments that are not only very diverse but that are characterized by rather unique organizational

characteristics: non-hierarchical structures, officials wearing "many hats," sparse resources, collegial decision making styles and other traits both seldom studied and difficult to operationalize (Cigler, 1987b; Sokolow, 1986a).

Fourth, traditional academic reward systems are not kind to applied researchers who promote their products. Because of this, many academics have not developed networks among potential users of their products. [6] The result is that the possibilities for informed capacity building and for training students about how small governments actually work are lessened. In effect, academic reward systems work against what academic research has revealed about organizational learning (Hirschman, 1965).

Fifth, the great diversity among small governments and among and between states makes truly comparative research difficult. The result is lone researchers or researchers in one state developing data bases for their home state but having little contact with others. Most of the research is of a traditional case study nature. Little effort has been made to systematically gather data--whether through such novel techniques as simulated case studies or aggregate data collection (Cigler, 1987a).

DEVELOPING A `NATIONAL' SMALL GOVERNMENT RESEARCH NETWORK

Small town research has suffered from definitional confusions of small town and rural, as well as inconsistent

operationalization of institutional, political, capacity building, and other variables. The usual research pitfalls abound--fuzzy conceptualization and imprecise measurement techniques (see Blalock, 1984). Payoffs from systematic data collection among small town researchers include those associated with any recurring data collection and analysis endeavors: analytical cumulativeness through replication, refutation, and extension of initial research; comparability of data and units of analysis; possibilities for longitudinal data; and cost effectiveness (Clark, 1981).

Public administration researchers would benefit from: (1) Developing cooperative strategies for joint data collection and analysis, as well as dissemination of findings; (2) Attempting a consensus on the initial types of data needed to facilitate future research on small town governance; and (3) Incorporating a users' perspective before data collection begins as well in dissemination of findings. No agreement need be reached regarding theoretical issues, just basic types of data to collect. (Certainly it would be welcomed to also reach some agreement regarding hypotheses to be tested among some participants in the proposed network.) At least, researchers might agree to inventory existing data sets, uncovering definitional and methodological problems and integrating some data files for broader use by other researchers. Detailed plans for

collecting original data would emerge after the other issues are addressed.

This section uses lessons learned from the author's single state series of studies on small communities, the North Carolina (N.C.) Local Policy Project, to call for the development of a National Small Government Research Network. Organized individual projects in each of the 50 states would be linked together on occasion to form the National Small Government Research Network.

Participating researchers could still pursue their unique research interests, those must useful to their individual states, but they would also participate through study development, implementation, and dissemination of findings, in a biennial research effort aimed at developing a national data base on small communities. Major attention would be devoted first toward development of basic data on small communities—their organization, structure, etc. In addition, national project participants would develop a series of research needs assessments for key substantive policy areas. As the project progressed, various teams of researchers would develop more policy-oriented research efforts. [7] The biennial volume, then, would generate both basic data and interpretation of it, as well as chapters on any of a variety of topics, with different policy foci in each volume. Cumulative data collection could involve, for examples, data on general background characteristics of

local leaders, expenditure/revenue data, fiscal stress, service levels and alternative delivery methods, networking among small town leaders and organizations, basic organizational structure, general small town/rural norms and values, etc. The series of biennial volumes would also help ameliorate the negative academic reward system characteristics placed on applied research endeavors.

PoliNet is the tool for facilitating timely research at low cost with initial funding through university professional development funds and/or seed money obtained through municipal and/or professional associations. After an anticipated initial successful research collaboration, and the preparation of a research needs assessment, the research group would attempt to obtain foundation, professional organization and/or governmental funding for continuing and expanding the project.

Polinet would also be used to generate practitioner input at all stages of the project and to disseminate research findings to key national organizations to facilitate the timely use of research products. The developing data base could be made available to other researchers through PoliNet and other forums such as this journal.

Initial data file organization and development, through use of PoliNet in accessing computer retrieval files already

in existence and in coordinating the new data generation, would itself be a valuable product--far better than what researchers currently have available in studying small communities. Eventually the online exchanges of information via PoliNet would evolve to sharing information on small governments with researchers studying all sizes of local governments as well as state-local and national-local relations.

The development of collaborative research across states is not novel, of course. Terry Clark at the University of Chicago, working with a number of researchers across the nation, conducts a nationwide effort to study fiscal austerity in 62 cities of 50,000 and over across 15 years. [8] The Brookings Institution used a collaborative field investigation framework to organize research on such topics as general revenue sharing and the monitoring of community development block grants (e.g., Nathan, Manvel, Calkins, 1975). Response rates for one effort in the fiscal austerity project, which used questionnaires to obtain data from 960 cities of 25,000 and over in population, achieved responses from 55.5% of the cities (Morgan and Pammer, 1986). Little effort was made to develop a users' perspective in guiding the research questions and/or collecting data (Clark, 1981).

The organization of research used by the N.C. Local Policy Project is different in that it utilizes a users'

perspective from development of research topics, through data collection, to dissemination of findings. This resulted in very high response rates--85 to 96 percent, for example, from mailed questionnaire surveys to communities of less than 10,000 in population. It also resulted in high research utilization rates. For example, a set of studies on local energy management aided in the initial development of a statewide local energy officer project by the North Carolina Alternative Energy Corporation. The first phase of the Local Energy Officer Project involved 17 communities with a total savings of $650,000--an average of over $2 in savings for every $1 spent for salaries and benefits of the local energy officers. The same studies were used by the state's Energy Division (N.C. Department of Commerce) in its program development and by the League of Municipalities to generate more interest in energy management since energy costs are second to personnel costs in the operating budgets of most local governments.

In effect, the N.C. Local Policy Project is a variant of action research (Peters and Robinson, 1984). Research findings are disseminated in ways useful both to practitioners and other academics. Typically, survey results are first published in municipal publications with a writing style geared for practitioner consumption, i.e., little use of jargon, limited use of sophisticated

statistical analyses other than relevant frequencies and simple tables, and an effort made to draw policy suggestions from the data.

Government, municipal, and professional organizations, as well as survey participants, receive all research products in a form usable to them, based on recommendations of an advisory board drawn from those organizations. One result of this dissemination strategy was an invitation for the project director's participation on several statewide policy boards. The energy management studies, for example, led to participation on the state Energy Division's local government planning committee which generated ideas for use of more than $1.6 million of U.S. Department of Energy's funding for state government programs to local governments. Another product was the initial development of an energy information brokerage service for local governments through a statewide computer network for local governments. Another was improved cooperation among state agencies and between state government and local professional organizations. After initial dissemination of research findings to practitioners, more sophisticated distribution is made via academic journals to contribute to our knowledge of the workings of local government. [9]

Since 1979, the project has completed six different studies of small communities (and one of larger cities) in the state. Research has been conducted on both the

municipal and county levels, with managers, clerks, selected program coordinators, and elected officials as respondents. The research approach has ranged from a mailed questionnaire survey to 250 small towns (less than 10,000 population) to intensive case studies of a dozen communities to simulated case studies in several dozen communities in which officials are systematically questioned about their community's likely response to a series of hypothetical situations (e.g., reactions to federal program cutbacks, infrastructure dilemmas, use of consulting firms under various fiscal conditions). Different sets of topics have been examined at two year intervals, with such topics as energy management, fiscal responses to the new federalism initiatives of the Reagan Administration, implementation of the small cities community development block grant program, municipal communication patterns, use of outside consultants, and local government capacity building efforts as examples of research concerns.

The very high response rates for the survey research (85-96 percent) are largely due to the organizational effort put into research before it begins via the incorporation of a users' perspective. Early on, an umbrella advisory group to the project was created, consisting of members from the state's League of Municipalities, Association of County Officials, Governor's Office, private groups, nonprofits,

etc. All research problem development, test instrument development, etc. is based on a close working relationship between the project director and the advisory board. Depending on topics researched in any given year, ad hoc advisory group members are added depending on their specialized interests in a project topic.

The funding for the North Carolina Local Policy Project has also been unusual in that the seven completed studies were done at very low cost. In the early years, two seed money grants from North Carolina State University's Faculty Professional Development Fund ($3500 total) were used to establish initial survey projects. In addition, the project director worked with the advisory board to obtain various contributions from participants. Thus, the League of Municipalities and Association of County Officials have provided mailing lists and labels, staff time for coding questionnaires, help in disseminating project findings, etc. Close contact with the advisory board was most instrumental in keeping costs low.

Although many revisions and improvements can be made on the initial design of the North Carolina Local Policy Project, an initial step in developing a national data base on small communities is the development of similar projects in each of the 50 states. [10] Even without formal individual state projects, replication studies and jointly managed original data collection can occur. Realities of

time and organization suggest that an initial pilot effort at organizing research in 6 or 8 states would be reasonable. Then, like any chicken-and-egg process, a successful collaborative research effort across those states could lead to more interest and involvement by other states. A first concern, then, is to hear from individuals in various states willing to participate in a pilot collaborative research undertaking to begin the development of a national small government data base. [11]

Those interested in a National Small Government Research Network should also join RPAN and subscribe to Polinet, the telecommunications tool that will facilitate information and communication networking with ease. [12] Polinet requires resources rapidly becoming available to most academic researchers: (1) A microcomputer equipped with communications hardware (i.e., modem and phone jack) or a terminal; (2) Communications software (e.g. Hayes SMARTCOM II); and (3) A standard phone line.

This article's author is the editor of PoliNet's forthcoming Intergovernmental--State/Local online newsletter. The first component of the newsletter will be a section devoted to research on small governments, to facilitate the organization of a national research group on small governments that can still serve individual states and address the uniqueness of small communities within each

state, yet yield a comparative data base on small communities nationally. Researchers are free to pursue whatever research they wish but cooperation will be essential for developing a common project implemented in each state every other year.

Another product that should emerge once a research agenda is established and actual research conducted is the dissemination of research via PoliNet online networks. In addition, the hope is to publish the biennial volumes mentioned earlier, much like the Municipal Yearbook published by the International City Management Association, but including articles of a more analytic nature.

The online Intergovernmental section of PoliNet will simultaneously develop greater contact with other researchers and attempt to add sections and existing newsletters and journals produced by a number of organizations—all aimed at integrating data collection, research collaboration, and dissemination of findings on local governments of any size.

The remainder of this section is devoted to offering some broad guideposts for establishing an initial research agenda for the pilot collaboration:

(1) Multiple ways of learning and knowing must be accepted by the research community (allowing for inclusion of a full array of concerns and the ability to ask key questions).

(2) An inventory of existing data sets should be prepared, followed by preparation of integrated files of usable data.

(3) An inventory of data needs should be developed at the outset, in cooperation with both researchers and users of their products. This could involve a formal research needs assessment via a PoliNet poll among the existing research community, key rural organizations, and those who train rural officials and/or a mailed questionnaire survey that obtains perceptions about the types of "nuts and bolts" organizational, policy and management data needed about local governments.

(4) Since truly comparative data is necessary, the formal development of a small government project in each state, tied together through an umbrella organization, would be an early objective. The umbrella unit could coordinate questionnaire development, data collection, and analysis once the inventory is developed and some data gathering priorities set. Such an arrangement for collecting original data should be flexible enough for academics to consider the unique needs of their state's rural governments, their own MPA programs, careers and reward structures, but allow aggregate base data collection and sharing. Given the ease of communication afforded by PoliNet, and the opportunities provided for low cost research (e.g., questionnaires can be

jointly developed electronically and "downloaded" in final form for use to anyone participating in the project), research can take many forms. Some states might pursue aggregate data collection via mailed questionnaire surveys, others might conduct qualitative research via case studies using similar questions in each of a number of states, while still others might pursue simulated case studies on a given topic across several states.

(5) Researchers should consider the development of a small government information network as part of a computer bulletin service in each state to track data needs and disseminate information among researchers, practitioners, and educators. (PoliNet's communication and information exchange capabilities will handle the national linkage among researchers and municipal/professional associations.)

(6) Researchers could also develop a survey instrument to gather data regarding educational training needs for careers in small communities so that research findings can be used in curriculum development.

CONCLUSION

The development of a National Small Government Research Network via PoliNet holds the opportunity to build a national data base for small communities. The same type of research organization format can be used for any public administration research. The time appears ripe for

promoting such low cost, systematic collaborative efforts to actually shape "new directions" in public administration research.

ENDNOTES

1. Readers may contact the author for samples of research products and/or test instruments: Beverly A. Cigler, Department of Political Science and Public Administration, Box 8102, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, North Carolina, 27695-8102. Or call, (919) 737-2481 (O) or (919) 847-7773 (H).

2. For reviews of useful existing research see: McKenna, 1986; Sokolow, 1986a, b; Honadle, 1983; and Cigler, 1984.

3. Contact: Dr. William A. Giles, Department of Political Science, P.O. Drawer PC, Mississippi State University, Mississippi State, MS 39762; telephone (601) 325-7855.

4. Addresses of key information utilities are: Delphi, General Videotex Corporation, 3 Blackstone Street, Cambridge, MA 02139 (800) 544-4005; The Source, 1616 Anderson Road, McLean, VA 22102 (703) 734-7500; and CompuServe, 5000 Arlington Centre Boulevard, P.O. Box 20212, Columbus, OH 43220 (800) 848-8199.

5. For a description of PoliNet, see Howell, Vasu, and Vasu, 1986, in press. For general information on computer networking, see the book by Hiltz and Turoff, 1978. Michael L. Vasu, North Carolina State University, is the Executive Editor of PoliNet; telephone (919) 737-3791.

6. There are signs that this may be changing. The Council of State Governments, for example, has created a Center for Agriculture and Rural Development which seeks to act as a

broker between the research community and state officials. Contact: Judi Hackett, Director, Center for Agriculture and Rural Development, Headquarters Office, Iron Works Pike, P. O. Box 11910, Lexington, KY 40578; telephone (606) 252-2291.

7. For an example of a research needs assessment on rural infrastructure see Cigler, 1986b. Also see the 1982 monograph, Land Use Research Needs developed by North Carolina Land Use Congress, Inc. Both documents are available from the author.

8. The most important product from this effort is Clark and Ferguson, 1983. Researchers interested in the National Small Government Research Network would benefit from examining this and Clark's 1981 book, Urban Policy Analysis.

9. Research articles have appeared in such journals as Public Administration Review, Policy Studies Review, Municipal Management and a wide variety of other journals and as book chapters.

10. Contact the author for more details on the N.C. project's design. Professor Terry Busson, Eastern Kentucky University, recently successfully replicated one N.C. data collection on small cities reponses to the New Federalism. See Cigler, 1986a for the N.C. findings and contact the author for a copy of the questionnaire used.

11. See endnote 1 for the author's address and phone numbers, or use PoliNet to send electronic mail. After the

initial draft of this manuscript was circulated to a number of researchers focusing on small towns, a face-to-face organizational meeting in Washington, D.C. at the offices of the Economic Research Service, USDA, took place on July 11, 1986. The result was the creation of a National Small Government Research Network, refining the foundations of the project set forth in this article. The group will meet again at the 1987 ASPA conference in Boston, to present the results of the group's extensive subcommittee efforts between July 1986 and March 1987. Initial plans are to launch a multiple state collaborative research effort later in 1987. The research group is seeking additional members from the 50 states.

12. PoliNet has offered the National Small Government Research Network several free memberships. Contact the author, if interested.

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